

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 141

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN 141 VICE 41)

DEPT PLEASE PASS NSC

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IZ, US
SUBJECT: US-IRAQI RELATIONS

1. ON THE BARREN LANDSCAPE OF US-IRAQI RELATIONS, ANY
POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT TAKES ON CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE.
OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, THERE HAS BEEN A SERIES
OF EVENTS CONSTITUING A DEPARTURE FROM EARLIER PERIODS:
--TWO GOI OFFICIALS FLEW TO ATTEND A USG-SPONSORED
CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION;
--THREE OTHERS WILL TAKE A TOUR ARRANGED BY THE
AMERICAN SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION;
--TRAINING HAS BEEN REQUESTED FOR NINE AGRICULTURAL
SPECIALISTS;
--THE MFA HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN OUR OFFER OF A
CU-SPONSORED CLASSICAL GUITARIST;
--PREPARATIONS FOR A MAJOR USG-SPONSORED TRADE
MISSION MOVED FORWARD.
EACH OF THESE BY ITSELF IS INTERSTING, GIVEN THE
POOR STATE OF AFFAIRS IN GENERAL, AND AS A GROUP THEY
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HAVE EVEN GREATER WEIGHT.

2. THERE HAD BEEN NEAR EUPHORIA IN BAGHDAD LAST
YEAR CONCERNING THE POSSIBLE REESTABLISHMENT OF
RELATIONS, AND SOME MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS
WERE APPARENTLY EXPECTING THE ANNOUNCEMENT ALMOST
DAILY, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE MAY VISIT OF U/SEC

HABIB. MUCH OF THE ENTHUSIASM HAD EVAPORATED WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME, HOWEVER, AND IT IS PRETTY MUCH AGREED THAT WHATEVER THE CHANCES MAY HAVE BEEN PRIOR TO PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM, THEY WERE MARKEDLY POORER AFTER.

3. IN POINT OF FACT, BY THE TIME OF THE SADAT INITIATIVE FOREIGN MINISTER HAMMADI HAD ALREADY TOLD THE SECRETARY (AT THEIR OCTOBER 3 UN MEETING) THAT IRAQ WAS NOT READY TO RESUME DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS DESPITE THE ANNOUNCED US WILLINGNESS. HE DID SAY THAT THE GOI WAS NOT OPPOSED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER TYPES OF RELATIONS, AND IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT WE HAVE VIEWED THE EVENTS MENTIONED IN PARA 1.

4. AT A RECEPTION IN MY HONOR HOSTED BY THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR, I MET HASSAN AL-ANBARI, WHO IS THE DEPUTY OF FIRST INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT CHIEF WISSAM AL-ZAHAWI, AND DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE IN THAT DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE FOR RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AL-ANBARI, WHO WAS IN NEW YORK AT THE TIME OF THE VANCE/HAMMADI MEETING, SUMMARIZED THE GOI'S POSITION ESSENTIALLY AS ABOVE, AND ADDED HIS HOPE THAT WE HAD NOTED THE SPECIFIC RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THEY WERE TAKING PLACE DESPITE SHARP DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST PROBLEMS, AND MADE A POINT OF THE FACT THAT THE DECISION TO ACCEPT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ELECTRICAL ENERGY TRADE MISSION IN FEBRUARY WAS REACHED ONLY AFTER VERY CAREFUL CONSIDERATION.

5. COMMENT: CONSIDERING THE STRONGLY ANTI-AMERICAN POSITION OF THE GOI, AND THE VITRIOLIC ATTACKS TO WHICH WE HAVE BEEN EXPOSED SINCE THE SADAT VISIT, THERE MAY WELL HAVE BEEN CONSCIOUS DECISION TO EXPAND CONTACTS IN NON-POLITICAL FILEDS. IT IS WORTH NOTING, HOWEVER, THAT ONLY TWO GOI OFFICIALS APPEARED AT THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR'S RECEPTION OUT OF THE SIXTEEN HE INVITED.

6. AL-ANBARI'S COMMENTS SHOULD ALSO BE CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF HIS PERSONAL CAREER ASPIRATIONS, PERHAPS INCLUDING HIS DESIRE TO BECOME OUR PRINCIPAL CONTACT IN THE MFA. I HAVE HAD AN APPOINTMENT REQUEST PENDING FOR THE LAST TWO WEEKS WITH ZAHAWI, WITH WHOM MY PREDECESSOR DEALT MORE OR LESS REGULARLY. AL-ANBARI IMPLIED THAT THE DELAY WAS INTENDED TO TRANSMIT A MESSAGE, I.E. I SHOULD DEAL WITH HIM, BUT WE HAVE THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT ZAHAWI HAS INDEED BEEN QUITE BUSY. HOWEVER ONE INTERPRETS AL-ANBARI'S REMARKS, AT LEAST SOME USG PROGRAMS HAVE BEGUN TO MOVE.

THIS CAN BE REGARDED AS DESIRABLE, SINCE IT MAY ASSIST IN
EVENTUALLY ESTABLISHING A KIALOGUE ON TOUGHER SUBJECT,
OF GREATER CONCERN.
PECK

NOTE BY OC/T: PASSED NSC.

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